



News Release

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MSHA's aggressive actions to implement the MINER Act have improved safety for America's miners

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) has been aggressively implementing the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response (MINER) Act since the president signed the bill into law one year ago today.

"The MINER Act was the most significant federal mine safety law in nearly 30 years, and we at MSHA are fully committed to putting its protections in place for America's miners," said Richard E. Stickler, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "MSHA has made great strides in implementing the MINER Act in the past year, and we are continuing to meet or beat the deadlines set by the act."

Since the MINER Act was signed into law on June 15, 2006, MSHA has taken aggressive action to implement its provisions. The agency has:

- Issued an emergency temporary standard (ETS) – seven months before the deadline set by Congress – to increase the strength of seals in underground coal mines to 120 pounds per square inch (psi) and require environments behind 50 psi seals to be monitored and maintained inert.
- Established new maximum penalties for flagrant violations. MSHA already has issued 13 citations.
- Required directional lifelines in all primary and alternate escape routes out of a mine.
- Mandated additional safety training and expectations training on the use of self-contained self-rescuers at underground coal mines.
- Required redundant underground to surface communications systems in underground coal mines.
- Required all underground coal mines to submit emergency response plans that include, among other things, post-accident breathable air for trapped miners.
- Assigned three family liaisons to assist miners' families at a recent accident and trained 11 other liaisons to be available nationwide in the event of an emergency.
- Fined operators who did not report serious accidents within 15 minutes.

MSHA has taken the following additional steps to strengthen mine safety:

- Issued an ETS on mine evacuations three months before the MINER Act was enacted.
- Proposed the three largest civil penalties against underground coal operators in the history of the agency.
- Revised its civil penalty regulations to increase civil penalties across the board.
- Launched special emphasis programs to examine retreat mining practices, highwalls, roof/rib supports, black lung awareness and coal dust control methods.
- Issued comprehensive accident reports on the Sago, Aracoma and Darby accidents that provide teaching models for lessons learned.
- Put eight mine operators on notice that MSHA is prepared to use its strongest enforcement tool against them if they repeatedly disregard mine safety and health regulations.

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